

The IDVA Update



Mitch Daniels - Governor
Tom Applegate - Director

Winter 2008/2009

The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs Newsletter

Winter Edition

Transition Workshops Scheduled to Assist National Guard Returnees



Joint Forces Headquarters of the Indiana National Guard has announced the schedule for upcoming transition workshops. These workshops are generally held 90 days after the return of a National Guard unit and take place in the local armory or some other convenient location, such as the local high school.

State and federal agencies are on hand to assist the returnees with any claims or applications they may need help with. County Veterans' Service Officers are welcome to attend, introduce themselves to the returnees and assist with claims. We will announce the exact location of the events as we get the information from the Guard.

April 4 and 5, 2009 – Indianapolis
April 18, 2009 – New Albany
April 19, 2009 – Muncie
April 25 and 26, 2009 – Fort Wayne
May 2, 2009 – Evansville
May 3, 2009 – Jasper

Wreaths Across America



The Indiana Veterans' Memorial Cemetery (IVMC) at Madison, Indiana was proud to participate on Saturday, December 13, 2008 in its first "Wreaths Across America" ceremony.

This year marked the 17th anniversary of the program but the first year the cemetery has participated. On Saturday, in coordination with the annual wreath-laying at Arlington National Cemetery, over 300 Remembrance Ceremonies world-wide were conducted. It was an opportunity to remember the fallen and to honor those who served.

430 wreaths were placed prior to the ceremony by the Civil Air Patrol and by local veterans. The wreaths, made of real evergreens, were donated from contributions made on the Wreaths Across America web site at <http://www.wreaths-across-america.org>.

IDVA Director, Tom Applegate spoke briefly during the program as did Andy Lytle representing Madison's Mayor Armstrong. Allen Manning from Disabled American Veterans' Chapter 55 emceed the program and special holiday wreaths were placed at the base of each of the respective military branch flagpoles in memory of the interred men and women from those services as well as those still serving. Army veteran Denzil Boltman placed the wreath for the Army; Navy veteran Clyde James for the Navy; Marine veteran Tom Everett for the US Marine Corps; IVMC Superintendent and US Air Force veteran, Alan Burnham, represented the Air Force

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and; US Coast Guard veteran Jon Uithol the Coast Guard. Specials wreaths were placed by Merchant Marine veteran Arthur Perkinson in memory of those who served in the US Merchant Marines, and the Civil Air Patrol placed a holiday wreath in honor of the 93,852 United States Servicemen from all branches of the service whose last known status was either Prisoner of War or Missing in Action.

The Cemetery would like to thank all those who donated and those who attended the ceremony on this very cold Saturday in December.

VA Opens New Clinic in Vincennes, Indiana to Better Serve Veterans



Knox County Veterans Service Officer Kenny Newton was on hand to welcome the first veterans to the new clinic.



Registered nurse Marnie Obermeyer with 85 year old Ralph M. Eagle U. S. Army WWII veteran who served with the tank destroyers in the Battle of the Bulge, the first patient to be seen at the new clinic.

On October 30, 2008, the VA opened the a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Vincennes, Indiana. Knox county veteran service officer Kenny Newton was on hand to welcome veterans and their families for the grand opening. The address is 1813 Willow St. Suite 6A. Vincennes, IN.

Les Walden, Clay County VSO Passes Away



Lester Wayne Walden, 73
APRIL 14, 1935 — DEC. 4, 2008
BRAZIL— Lester Wayne Walden, age 73 of Brazil, died at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, December 4, 2008, at St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis. Following his death he was an organ and tissue donor.

Les was born April 14, 1935, in Johnson County, Indiana, as the son of Lester H. and Violet Slevin Walden. Following graduation from high school, Les continued his education at Indiana State University. He spent over 20 years serving in military service, both in the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force, where he had served as an OSI officer. He continued his service to the military as the Clay County Veterans Service Officer until his death. He also worked for 22 years with Pinkerton Security, where he was district manager.

He married Madeline Ann Mathews July 26, 1969, in Edinburgh. He was a member of the VFW, where he was the current Post Commander, Kiwanis Club, Masonic Lodge, Zorah Shrine Patrol Unit, Scottish Rite of Terre Haute, and BPOE Elks, where he was a Past Exalted Ruler. He was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Brazil, where he had served as a Deacon and Elder.

Les spent much of his life focusing on the needs of area children and ensuring benefits for military veterans. As Post Commander of the local VFW Post 1127, he had started the construction of their new building in Brazil and was looking forward to its dedication in the next few months. He was preceded in death by his parents; his first wife, Joyce Helen Burton; one daughter, Cynthia Gayle Walden and one brother, Clarence "Bud" Walden.

He is survived by his wife Ann; two sons, Robert B. Walden of Staunton and Jeffery W. Walden and wife Annette of Rosedale; three daughters, Constance R. Walden of Staunton, Sherry L. Kearschner and husband Ron of Brazil and Leslie A. Webb and husband Jason of Winslow, IN; one brother, Doyle Walden and wife Bev; five sisters, Evelyn Wood, Betty Richardson, Rose Swann and husband Sam, Alice Walden and Phyllis Walden; thirteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

DoD Contracts for Free YMCA Membership for Deployed Guard and Reserve Families



The Department of Defense announced October 1 that families of deployed members of the National Guard and Reserve, active duty service members on independent duty and their families, and active duty service members and their families assigned to selected bases would be eligible for free family memberships at participating YMCAs in their local community.

The new program, which is effective immediately, was unveiled in a signing ceremony presided by Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David S.C. Chu. Also signing the document was Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs Thomas F. Hall and the Executive Director of the Armed Services YMCA, retired Navy Rear Adm. Frank Gallo.

"We know these programs are key to personal health and well-being, help build strong families, and reduce stress and feelings of isolation," Chu said. "I am extremely pleased to announce our new partnership."

The free YMCA memberships for Guard and Reserve families will be available while the service member is deployed for a minimum of six months. The deploying service member will also be eligible for three months pre- and post-deployment membership to help promote family participation.

Active duty families assigned to independent duty stations, such as recruiting and ROTC assignments and not currently receiving support from the service component will also be eligible for free memberships at participating YMCAs. Single service members are eligible for fitness center memberships up to \$50 a month.

Active duty families at selected bases will also be eligible for free YMCA memberships as part of a pilot program. Memberships will be issued on a first come,

first served basis with 300 to 450 family memberships available per joint base location.

The selected bases are: Lackland Air Force Base/Randolph AFB/Ft. Sam Houston, Texas; Langley AFB, Va.; McCord Air Force Base/Ft. Lewis, Wash.; Ft. Carson, Colo.; Pearl Harbor/Hickam AFB, Hawaii; Naval Weapons Station, Charleston S.C.; McGuire AFB/Ft. Dix/ Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station, N.J.; Anacostia Naval Air Station /Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.; Ft. Myer/Henderson Hall, Va.; Elmendorf AFB/Ft. Richardson, Alaska; and Andrews AFB/Naval Air Facility D.C., Md.

Additionally, 32 hours a month of free respite child care will be available for families of deployed National Guard and Reserve and geographically dispersed active duty service members in 10 states with YMCA child care programs preapproved by DoD.

Respite Child Care is currently available at participating YMCAs in the following ten states: Indiana, Maryland, Montana, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington. DoD is working with the Armed Services YMCA on ways to expand the number of YMCA child care programs eligible to offer respite care in order to meet this critical need.

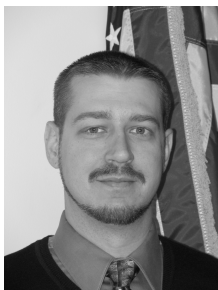
Participating YMCAs have agreed to cap their monthly fees and waive all joining fees so there is no cost for service members and their families for membership. Some classes may have fees associated with them and if so, the service member will be responsible for those costs.

"Since the Civil War, the Armed Services YMCA has been committed to supporting our troops and improving their quality of life," said Gallo. "This new initiative will go a long way to help America's military families live healthy lives."

Signing up for the program requires a YMCA/DoD eligibility form, a copy of deployment orders and military ID. The YMCA/DoD eligibility form is available at <http://www.militaryonesource.com/>.

A completed eligibility form, a copy of deployment orders (where applicable) and the military ID are all that are needed for the local YMCA to process memberships.

IDVA Welcomes Two New Staff Members



The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs is pleased to announce that Harvey D. Taylor has accepted the position of Program Director for the State Approving Agency. Harvey joins the Agency transferring over from the Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

While working at the Shelbyville WorkOne as a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP), Harvey provided case management services to veterans seeking employment and training. Harvey's responsibilities also included informing and referring veterans to appropriate agencies so that they could leverage their veteran benefits in their job search. Harvey's dedication to his clients in Shelby and Hancock counties recently earned him an Individual Incentive Award at the October 2008 DWD Vet Conference.

Harvey brings a diverse skill set with him to IDVA. He served in the United States Air Force as a Security Policeman for Air Combat Command, 7th Security Police Squadron, Dyess AFB, Abilene, Texas providing vigilant security for some of the Air Force's most vital resources from 1995-1998. He completed his A.S. degree in Computer Technology in 2003, and his B.S. degree in Organization Leadership and Supervision in 2007 from Purdue University School of Statewide Technology, Columbus. He has worked as a Computer Support Specialist, Loss Prevention Manager, and an Education Director for a 600 member local church in Columbus. Harvey stays active in his community as an Abstinence Education Facilitator for the Pregnancy Care Center, and as a Bi-Vocational Pastor for a small congregation in St. Paul, IN. Harvey and his wife Jenny, a 2nd grade teacher, and 3 yr. old son Sam are residents of Columbus in Bartholomew County, and are looking forward to a new addition to their family in June!



Effective Monday, December 15th, IDVA welcomes Noelle Wikert to the Receptionist desk. Noelle comes to us from Kelly Services and is very well qualified. She has been with Kelly since 2005 and has acted as an administrative assistant for Targanta Therapeutics and Elanco Animal Health. She has over nine years of experience as an executive-level administrative assistant and has advance knowledge of the Microsoft Suite, Lotus and Visio. Noelle is married, lives with her husband, Rick, and daughter in Indianapolis and is an active Girl Scout leader. We welcome Noelle to IDVA and hope her stay is a long one.

Shinseki Nominated as VA Secretary



Sunday, December 7, 2008
02:55pm EST / Posted by Dan McSwain

President-elect Barack Obama announced General Eric Shinseki as his selection to be United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs. During the press conference, President-elect Obama praised General Shinseki's service to his country, and reinforced the importance of the sacred trust between America and her troops.

General Shinseki is the first Asian American to reach the rank of four-star general. He served two combat tours in Vietnam, where he was wounded in action. On the anniversary of the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941, President-elect Obama stressed the importance of the post General Shinseki would hold.

"We owe it to all our veterans to honor them as we honored our Greatest Generation," the President-elect said. "Not just with words, but with deeds."

General Shinseki's appointment has garnered the support and praise of veterans' organizations. National President of Vietnam Veterans of America John Rowan called the selection "a promising choice." Veterans for Common Sense released a statement in "strong" support

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of Shinseki. The statement read: "In February 2003, General Shinseki honestly and correctly assessed our nation's military needs before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. This same level of candor and honesty will serve President-elect Obama well so he can quickly and accurately identify VA's many challenges and then implement responsible solutions that take into consideration our veterans' needs and concerns."

Bipartisan members of Congress have weighed in positively on the selection. On the "Fox News Sunday" program, Republican Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama called Shinseki "a great soldier, a great leader." Referring to Shinseki's recommendations to former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in a 2003 assessment of the American military involvement in Iraq, Sen. Shelby said, "we should have listened to [Gen. Shinseki]... We didn't and look where we are today."

On the same program, Democratic Senator Carl Levin said that the selection shows that the President-elect "will welcome people who disagree with him to express those views to him."

In a release from his office, Sen. Patrick Leahy praised the selection, saying, "throughout a stellar career, especially in his time as the Army's Chief of Staff, [Shinseki's] words and deeds reflected an overwhelming care about soldiers and all of our military service members."

Landmark Court Ruling Victory for Widows of Disabled Veterans

By Dave Autry

The Disabled American Veterans hails as a major victory a recent federal court ruling that would restore an estimated \$30 million in death benefits wrongly withheld from the surviving spouses of disabled military retirees.

The decision in Sharp, et al. v. United States handed down by the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, ordered the Department of Defense to refund military retiree Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities withheld from three widowed spouses who also received veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The court found that the DoD's dollar-for-dollar deduction of

DIC payments from SBP benefits was based on a faulty interpretation of federal law.

"It is deplorable that this had to be brought to court, but after years of fighting, the right decision was made," said Washington Headquarters Executive Director David W Gorman. "But this case is much bigger than restoring the benefits just to the three courageous widows who served as plaintiffs in this case."

The road to victory in this important case began when one of the plaintiffs, Pamela J. Sharp, the widow of a retired brigadier general, sought DAV's assistance with her survivor's benefits. She explained the Defense Finance and Accounting Service had reduced her SBP payments by the amount of her VA benefits-money she was entitled to and badly needed.

The DAV looked closely into the matter and determined she and other widows were being short-changed as well. The DAV referred the widows to the law firm of Weil Gotshal & Manges, which agreed to handle the case on a pro bono basis. The court agreed with the plaintiff's argument that the widows' SBP benefits were wrongly withheld by the Department of Defense based on a misinterpretation of federal law. Because the court's ruling turned on the interpretation of federal law, it also established a precedent that should result in the reinstatement of benefits to an entire class of survivors of disabled veterans.

When a military retiree dies, his or her retirement pay stops, potentially leaving the surviving spouse without a substantial income source. The SBP is insurance military retirees can purchase from the government so their surviving spouses receive a monthly payment to help make up for the loss of the retirement income.

Dependency and indemnity compensation is a monthly benefit paid to eligible survivors of military personnel who died while on active duty or veterans who die as the result of a service-connected cause. But until the court's ruling, to accept DIC, the Department of Defense required an equal cut in SBP, illegally saving the Pentagon millions of dollars in unpaid benefits. An estimated 59,000 military survivors were impacted by the SBP-DIC offset last year. The gov-

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ernment has projected that the reinstated benefits will exceed \$30 million.

"Veterans' survivors benefits are limited, so this is really going to help a lot of financially distressed widows," said National Service Director Randy Reese. "It is going to be a challenge to inform all those eligible that this injustice has been righted so they can apply for the benefit, but our National Service Officers will start right away." The Defense Department is expected to appeal the ruling.

For more information or assistance with a claim for survivor's benefits, contact your nearest National Service Office.

From the November-December 2008 DAV Magazine

Military PTSD Requirements Relaxed

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is amending its adjudication regulations regarding service connection for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The amendment will eliminate the requirement of evidence that corroborates the occurrence of in-service stressor in which PTSD is diagnosed in the service. This is necessary to facilitate the proof of service connection in such claims. By this amendment, the VA intends to reduce claim-processing time for such claims.

This interim final rule is effective Oct. 29, 2008. Going forward — in the absence of clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, and provided that the claimed stressor is consistent with the circumstances, conditions, or hardships of the veteran's service — the veteran's lay testimony alone may establish the occurrence of the claimed in-service stressor. The VA believes that this change will contribute to faster processing of PTSD claims by eliminating the need for VA to develop evidence of occurrence of the in-service stressor in claims in which the veteran's PTSD was diagnosed during service.

NACVSO Members Forum, Gary Chalupa, November 04, 2008

Indianapolis VA Regional Office Contracting Out VA Compensation and Pension Examinations

VA compensation and pension (C&P) examination scheduling had previously been the sole responsibility of the Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA) after receiving authorization to schedule from the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). The Indianapolis VA Regional Office (VARO) as part of VBA has recently started using a private examination firm for conducting many but not all the C&P examinations.

The Indianapolis VARO has released the following information concerning this new procedure: The contracting firm's name is Medical Examinations Solutions (MES). MES was founded in 1978, is a veteran owned and operated company having its headquarters in Houston, Texas, it does independent evaluations services, and was awarded a VA contract on July 31, 2008.

The Indianapolis VARO has contracted for MES to perform at least 440 C&P examinations per month. Veterans may be required to travel as far as 30 miles for a general medical appointment, and 100 miles for a specialty examination. Examinations will follow VA C&P templates. Veterans will receive a travel reimbursement, and no fees are charged to the veteran. Veterans will be notified when and where to report by letter, phone, and email if provided. Notification letters includes directions to the facility. MES will provide a reminder call 3 business days before the appointment, or the day before the appointment if the veteran was not reached with the first call.

The MES examiners are licensed in the State. MES examiners receive training in VA programs, sources of veterans assistance, the basics of claims adjudication, VA healthcare referral, and VA's disability examination protocol. The MES contractor has "internal" quality controls for examination content, documents when veterans decline any examination or testing, receive VA customer service training for their administrative staff and providers, and have their license audit by VA Central Office.

Although VA Medical Centers have from time to time contracted examinations to help catch-up with backlogs, C&P examinations contracted and controlled solely by VBA and especially the Indianapolis VARO is a new concept.

From the American Legion Service and Legislative Update, October 31, 2008

Some Veterans to See Another Travel Reimbursement Increase

WASHINGTON (Dec. 29, 2008) – Service-disabled and low-income veterans who are reimbursed for travel expenses while receiving care at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities will see an increase in their payments beginning January 9, 2009.

A recently passed law allows VA to cut the amount it must withhold from their mileage reimbursement. The deductible amount will be \$3 for each one-way trip and \$6 for each round trip -- with a calendar cap of \$18, or six one-way trips or three round trips, whichever comes first. The previous deductible was \$7.77 for a one-way trip, and \$15.54 for a round trip, with a calendar cap of \$46.62.

"I'm pleased that we can help veterans living far from VA facilities to access the medical and counseling help they deserve, especially in the current economic climate," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Together with the increased mileage rate approved last month, we can further reduce the financial hardship some veterans undergo to use our superior health care."

In November, Peake announced VA's second increase in the mileage reimbursement rate during 2008, from 28.5 cents to 41.5 cents a mile.

Service-disabled and low-income veterans are eligible to be reimbursed by VA for the travel costs of receiving health care or counseling at VA facilities. Veterans traveling for Compensation and Pension examinations also qualify for mileage reimbursement. VA can waive deductibles if they cause financial hardship.

From a VA News Release dated 29 December 2008



VA Ramps Up Job Search for Injured Vets

WASHINGTON (Dec. 30, 2008) – Thirty percent of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are veterans – the second highest ranking among cabinet departments after the Department of Defense -- and nearly 8 percent of VA employees are service-connected disabled veterans. But VA intends to increase the number of disabled veterans who obtain employment in its workforce.

"I am proud of this effort," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "VA knows the true quality of our men and women, and we should be a leader in employing them."

Peake said all severely injured veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be contacted by VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service to determine their interest in -- and qualifications for -- VA jobs. So far, that office has identified 2,300 severely injured veterans of those wars, of whom 600 expressed interest in VA employment.

The coordination service was established a year ago to recruit veterans into VA, especially those seriously injured in the current wars. It has nine regional coordinators working with local facility human resources offices across the country not only to reach out to potential job candidates but to ensure that local managers know about special authorities available to hire veterans. For example, qualified disabled veterans rated by the Defense Department or VA as having a 30 percent or more service-connected disability can be hired non-competitively.

"Our team is spreading the message that VA is hiring, and we want to hire disabled veterans," said Dennis O. May, director of VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service.

VA coordinators participate in military career fairs and transition briefings, and partner with veterans organizations, the Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service, as well as VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment and the Army's Warrior Transition Units.

From a VA News Release dated 30 December 2008.

State Approving Agency

New Updates Post-9/11 (Chapter 33) GI Bill Basic Eligibility



Recently the Secretary of Veterans Affairs sent a letter to all Higher Education Executives outlining the implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill which rolls out August 1, 2009.

Veterans that served at least 90 days on active duty after September 10, 2001 are entitled to educational benefits as outlined in the Educational Assistance Act of 2008. Those who served at least 36 months on active duty are entitled to the maximum benefit while those who served less time are eligible for a percentage of the full benefit based on length of service.



Benefits

Eligible veterans enrolled full-time are entitled to a tuition benefit, monthly housing allowance and a yearly books and supplies stipend. The tuition benefit covers up to the highest in-state undergraduate tuition at a public institution of higher learning. The monthly housing allowance is based on military housing benefit rates and the location of the receiving institution. Active duty members, veterans enrolled half-time or less, and veterans enrolled in distance education programs are not eligible for the housing allowance. The maximum yearly books and supplies stipend is \$1,000.

The Yellow Ribbon Program

The Yellow Ribbon Program provision of the Post 9/11 GI Bill allows institutions to enter into agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to fund tuition costs above the highest in-state

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Implementation

VA is working closely with the higher education community to ensure the smoothest possible implementation of these benefits. VA anticipated that regulations will be issued in early 2009. For more information please visit www.GIBILL.VA.gov.

Answers to the most frequently asked questions....

What does the Post- 9/11 GI Bill cover?

You may receive benefits for any approved program offered by a school in the United States that is authorized to grant an associate (or higher) degree. Visit VA's website at www.GIBILL.VA.GOV/GI Bill Info/programs.htm to verify that the program at your school, or the program at the school you would like to attend, is approved by the State Approving Agency (SAA). You may also receive benefits for tutorial assistance or up to \$2,000 for the reimbursement of one licensing or certification test.

** If you transferred to the Post-9/11 GI Bill from the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty, Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserves, or the Reserve Education Assistance Program, you may also receive Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for flight training, apprenticeship or on-the-job training programs, and correspondence courses.

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** The Post- 9/11 GI Bill is a new educational benefit program for individuals who served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill is continuing to evolve it has not been determined whether the Post-9/11 GI Bill will cover benefits for flight training, apprenticeship or on-the-job training programs and correspondence courses. Visit www.GIBILL.VA.GOV for up-to-date information on this and other education benefits.

Can I transfer my entitlement to my dependents?

If you are a member of the Armed Forces on August 1, 2009, the Department of Defense (DOD) may offer you the opportunity to transfer benefits to your spouse or dependent children. DOD and the military services will issue policy on entitlement to transferability in the coming months. Visit www.GIBILL.VA.GOV for up-to-date information on this and other education benefits.

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When Can I Receive Benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. No payments can be made under this program for training pursued before that date.

Am I Eligible?

You may be eligible if you served at least 90 aggregate days on active duty after September 10, 2001, and you are still on active duty or were honorably--discharged from the active duty; or -released from active duty and placed on the retired list or temporary disability retired list; or -released from active duty and transferred to the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve; or -released from the active duty for further service in a reserve component of the Armed Forces.

You may also be eligible if you were honorably discharged from active duty for a service-connected disability and you served 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001.

If I am eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve, or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program, am I eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill?

If, on August 1, 2009, you are eligible for one of these programs and you qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, you may make an irrevocable election to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

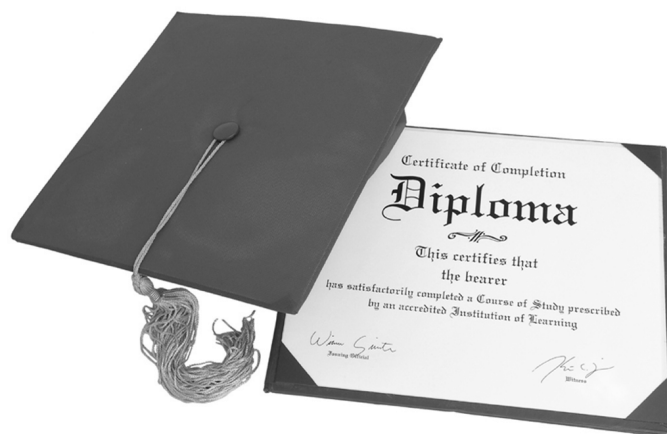
Note: Once you elect to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, you will no longer be eligible to receive benefits under the program from which you elected the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

How many months of assistance can I receive?

Generally, you may receive up to 36 months of entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

How long am I eligible?

You will be eligible for benefits for 15 years from your last period of active duty of at least 90 consecutive days. If you were released for a service-connected disability after at least 30 days of continuous service, you will also be eligible for benefits for 15 years.



Lugar, Hoosier soldier persuade Army to change Arlington burial process for enlisted soldiers

U.S. Sen. Dick Lugar, at the request of a Hoosier who has served in The Old Guard at Arlington National Cemetery, spurred the effort for all service members, regardless of rank, to receive full honor funerals.

Beginning in early 2009, enlisted service members will receive the same funeral honors as officers at Arlington National Cemetery. In addition to the previous rule that offered a firing party, bugler and chaplain, they also will have a caisson, band, colors team and escort platoon.

"I deeply appreciate Sergeant Durbin's impressive service to our country and his tireless advocacy on behalf of his fellow service members," Lugar said while traveling in Russia. "This is an appropriate recognition for service members who have given their lives while serving our nation."

The effort began in November 2007 when SFC Robert Durbin of Randolph County, Indiana, contacted Lugar. SFC Durbin, who has deployed five times since September 11, 2001, requested full burial honors at Arlington for service members regardless of rank. SFC Durbin served as a Full Honor Casket Team squad leader in The Old Guard at Arlington National Cemetery.

Through correspondence with the Army and SFC Durbin's persistence, the Army announced the policy change on December 16, 2008

(<http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/12/16/15216-army-broadens-funeral-honors-at-arlington-for-soldiers-killed-in-action/>).

The Army is in charge of Arlington National Cemetery.

Lugar, a former Naval intelligence officer, has strongly supported the military and veterans. In 2002, Lugar launched the Veterans History Project in Indi-

ana. To date, the Veterans History Project has preserved the memories of more than 8,000 Hoosier veterans in the permanent collection at the Library of Congress – more than any other state.

For more information on the Veterans History Project, visit <http://lugar.senate.gov/vhp/>.

VA Urges Vets to Sign-up for Direct Deposits

WASHINGTON – Every month, 730,000 veterans or survivors look for their compensation or pension checks in their mailboxes. Nearly all receive them, but theft and mail delays cause problems for some veterans, which can be prevented by direct deposits.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is urging those veterans and family members now receiving paper checks to join nearly 3.1 million others whose VA payments are safely deposited electronically.

"VA is teaming up with the Treasury Department in a new campaign to protect government beneficiaries against the theft of funds and of their identities," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Veterans earned -- and rely on -- the financial support we send them every month. I urge them to help VA ensure they get those funds reliably and safely by signing up for direct deposit."

Peake cited several easy ways to sign up for direct deposit -- calling toll-free at (800) 333-1795 or enrolling online at * www.GoDirect.org. * Veterans, and family members who receive VA payments, also can sign up by contacting a VA regional benefits office or their financial institution. Information about direct deposits will be included in VA's monthly compensation and pension envelopes throughout 2009.

The VA Secretary urged veterans to remember that direct deposits relieve worry about mail delivery being delayed by severe weather or natural disasters. The deposits also eliminate trips to banks or credit unions to deposit checks, while providing immediate access to money at the same time each month.

From a VA News Release dated December 15, 2008

Indiana Veterans Home



New Leadership Announced for Indiana Veterans' Home



INDIANAPOLIS (December 19, 2008) Mr. Tom Applegate, Director of the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs, has announced the appointment of Mr. Antonio "Tony" Stewart to Superintendent of the Indiana Veterans' Home (IVH) in West Lafayette, Indiana. The appointment became effective December

1, 2008.

Tony's expertise includes strong administrative, operational and leadership skills. His 19+ years of experience in the field of Health Care began in 1989 when he joined the United States Army as a combat medic. He has worked in a wide range of healthcare settings including nursing homes, hospitals and clinics. Tony has received diverse training in both military healthcare and civilian healthcare settings which will allow him to deliver unsurpassed nursing and rehabilitation specialty care oversight.

This oversight will facilitate outstanding care for the patients and residents of IVH which includes a wide range of therapeutic options for their special needs. His responsibilities as Superintendent include

day-to-day operations and practice management. Prior to joining IVH, Tony was the Executive Director of Muncie Health and Rehabilitation Center. Mr. Stewart holds a MBA from Indiana Wesleyan University, a BS in Healthcare Management from Towson University and is also a Licensed Practical Nurse from St. Philips College.

The Indiana Veterans' Home also welcomed Mrs. Melissa Durr as the new Assistant Superintendent. Her appointment became effective December 8, 2008. Previously, Melissa served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Indiana Association of Area Agencies on Aging and will now be responsible for Administrative Operations at IVH. Mrs. Durr holds both a MS and BS in Secondary Education from Indiana University, and is the daughter of a veteran.

IVH Purchases an Inventory Control System

"The Indiana Veterans' Home recently purchased and began utilizing a new inventory control system which will allow the maintenance department to more efficiently and accurately track their inventory. The new system will replace the process of physically tracking inventory by hand and has already been very effective in helping to organize the storeroom. IVH Physical Plant Director Jamie Gerald is excited about the new system and would like to recognize storeroom clerk, Mr. Jeff Daniels, for his hard work in making the transition to a new system a success.

Mr. Daniels, IVH Domiciliary residents Mr. Bruce Turner and Mr. Richard Mann, and many others helped with the storeroom reorganization and inventory counts were instrumental in getting the new system online. Mr. Gerald reports that the implementation process required a lot of hard work, but the new inventory control system will be a great resource for the maintenance department and the Indiana Veterans' Home as they improve the process and timeliness of work orders."

DoD Revises Purple Heart Eligibility Criteria To Allow Award To POWs Who Die In Captivity



The Department of Defense recently announced it has expanded the Purple Heart eligibility criteria allowing prisoners-of-war who died in captivity to receive the award.

The revised department policy presumes, for service members who die in captivity as a qualifying prisoner-of-war, that their death was the "result of enemy action," or the result of wounds incurred "in action with the enemy" during capture, or as a result of wounds incurred as a "result of enemy action" during capture, unless compelling evidence is presented to the contrary.

The revised policy allows retroactive award of the Purple Heart to qualifying prisoners-of-war since Dec. 7, 1941. Posthumous award will be made to the deceased service member's representative, as designated by the secretary of the military department concerned, upon application to that military department.

Each military department will publish application procedures and ensure they are accessible by the general public. Family members with questions may contact the services: Army: Military Awards Branch, (703) 325-8700; Navy: Navy Personnel Command, Retired Records Section, (314) 592-1150; Air Force: Air Force Personnel Center, (800) 616-3775; Marine Corps: Military Awards Branch, (703) 784-9340. For further information, media representatives should contact Eileen Lainez, (703) 695-3895, eileen.lainez@osd.mil.

U.S. Department of Defense

New POW Presumptive Disability

President Bush signed Public Law 110-389, the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2008, into law on October 10, 2008. One of the provisions of that law adds osteoporosis to the list of presumptive disabilities for former Prisoners of War (POW). This will allow VA to compensate former POWs who develop osteoporosis anytime after their military discharge.

From the American Legion Service & Legislative Update, December 23, 2008

Special Claims Handling Procedures for Missing Documents

VA has recently conceded that some documents in VA's possession may have been mistakenly or illegally destroyed. VA has therefore agreed to accept and consider allegations from claimants and representatives if their documents submitted to VA between April 14, 2007 and October 14, 2008 are missing. Claimants have until November 17, 2009 to file for consideration under VA's "Special Claims Handling Procedures for Missing Documents." Claimants should include as much supporting evidence as possible with the claim, including items, such as, copies of the previously submitted but missing documents and/or claim forms.

From the American Legion Service & Legislative Update, December 23, 2008



VA Now Paying Retroactive Month-of-Death Benefit

A law effective from 1997 required VA to pay surviving spouses the veteran's compensation or pension payment for the month of the veteran's death. VA improperly implemented the change in law by requiring surviving spouses to file a death benefits survivors pension or compensation claim before VA would paid the month-of-death benefit. This resulted in many surviving spouses failing to receive the one time month-of-death benefit. VA has now assigned a task force to review payment records for veterans who died after December 31, 1996, and who are survived by a spouse. The review will identify those to whom VA owes retroactive benefits for the month of the veteran's death. Current address information is being obtained for as many of these beneficiaries as possible. VA is to start issuing retroactive payments to eligible surviving spouses at the end of December. VA states it will continue issuing payments as additional unpaid beneficiaries are identified with available current address information.

A special Survivors' Call Center has been established for spouses who believe they may be entitled to this retroactive month-of-death benefit. Surviving spouses are encouraged to contact the Survivors' Call Center at the toll-free telephone number, 1-800-749-8387. Call center agents will assist surviving spouses in providing VA with the information needed to determine their eligibility. The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm central standard time. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at

<http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>.

VA's Search for Eligible Survivors Continues

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) identified nearly 11,000 surviving spouses of deceased veterans who were slated to receive a lump-sum payment before the New Year to correct an error in their VA benefits. They also documented more than 73,000 who had been previously paid. VA officials are still tracking down eligible survivors.

"I am pleased that our task force working to correct this problem has been able to identify this first group," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "We understand the difference these funds can make for these surviving spouses, especially during the holiday season."

Payments were to be released to those survivors on Dec. 29. The total value of the payments is about \$24 million.

At issue is a 1996 federal law that makes a surviving spouse eligible to receive the veteran's VA compensation or pension benefit for the month of the veteran's death. VA failed to properly implement that law in all cases.

Most likely to have been affected by this problem are surviving spouses who never applied for VA survivors' benefits following the death of a veteran. Eligible for the payment are surviving spouses of veterans who died after Dec. 31, 1996. The Department doesn't have current addresses for many of them, which makes the process of contacting them difficult.

VA has established a special Survivor Call Center (1-800-749-8387) for spouses who believe they may be eligible for this retroactive benefit. The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Central Standard Time. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>.

From a VA News Release dated 24 December 2008

The Indiana Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom Memorial Wall

Indiana has sustained the following
casualties since the last Update



Army Specialist William J. McClellan, 22, originally from New Castle, raised in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Died November 6, 2008 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington D. C. while being treated for injuries sustained in January in a roadside explosion.

He was based in Fort Campbell, Ky., and was a member of Alpha Company, 502nd Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. He and his wife, Heather, resided in Clarksville, TN and he was buried in Tennessee.



Arkansas Army National Guard Spc. James M. Clay, 25, of Mountain Home, Ark., born in and mother resides in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment, 39th Brigade Combat Team, Arkansas Army National Guard, Little Rock, Ark.; died Nov. 13, 2008 in Anbar province, Iraq, of injuries sustained in a vehicle accident.



U.S. Army Specialist Joseph M. Hernandez, 24, Hammond, Indiana.

Died Jan. 9, 2009 with two other soldiers in the Zabul Province of Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near their vehicle in Jaldak.

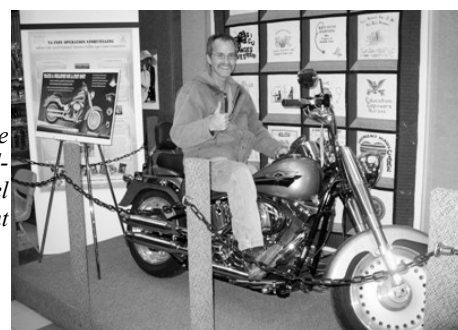
They were assigned to the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, Hohenfels, Germany, supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

Motorcycle Drawing Benefits Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center

Bud Henley of Henley's Kustom Painting and Service wanted to do something special to support the OEF/OIF service men and women receiving their care that the Roudebush VA Medical Center (VAMC). Henley purchased a new 2008 Harley Davidson Fat Boy Motorcycle and teamed up with Indiana Rolling Thunder, Chapter One to run the drawing. The drawing for the bike was held just before the start of the Indianapolis Veterans Day Parade by Mayor Greg Ballard USMC (ret) of Indianapolis on November 11. The winner of the Harley-Davidson was also a former Marine, Michael Syverson of Fishers, Indiana. \$45,812.24 was raised from the ticket sales for the bike. The money was placed in to the General Post Funds at the VA to support the needs of Indiana OEF/OIF veterans at the medical center.



Mayor Greg Ballard USMC (ret) and Dick Harrington of Rolling Thunder leaving a voice mail for the winner Michael Syverson after the drawing for the bike.



Winner of the 2008 Harley-Davidson Fat Boy, Michael Syverson checking out his new Fat Boy.



From L to R Dick Harrington from Rolling Thunder and Bud Henley from Henley's Kustom Painting present a check for \$45,819 to Tom Mattice, director of the Richard L. Roudebush VAMC for the OEF/OIF program.



Director's Comments

IDVA Fall Conference Report

The Fall Conference on 30 October 2008 at Turkey Run State Park was a real success. All of the comments I heard concerning the content and conduct of the conference were very positive and most everyone seemed to enjoy the scenic location. The only problem was in the attendance. We had received only 27 responses from CVSOs and their guests and that's how many we reported would be attending. Approximately 65 for lunch. Instead, 47 CVSOs plus many assistants showed up as well as many guests. There were over 80 meals served and several had to wait for a seat at the table.

Don't misunderstand, I was very happy for the turnout. All I ask for 2009 is that everyone who is coming lets me know.

We will continue this tradition next year and will try for Pokagon State Park near Angola, Indiana for approximately the same time-frame.

Governor's Memorial Certificate

The response to this new honor for Hoosier veterans has been overwhelming. Since September 15th when we announced the program, we have sent out 437 certificates to the survivors of 166 veterans. I have decided to expand the program to include National Guard and Reserve members. Please inform the funeral homes and the surviving spouses and family members in your area of this offer.

Maybe down the road IDVA will be able to hire a Memorial Programs Coordinator to handle this and other similar programs.

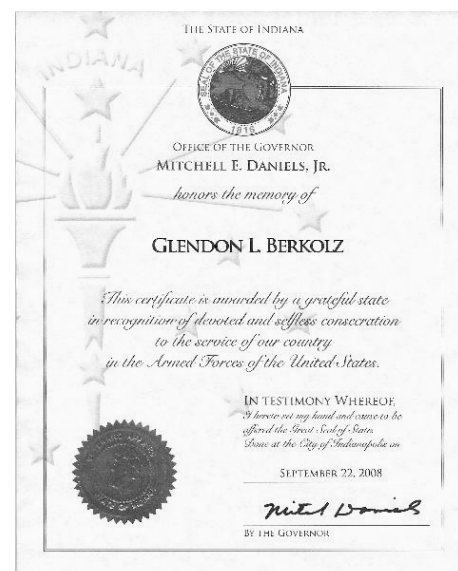
Proposed Legislation

IDVA will be introducing legislation this session which will make some changes in the DAV license plate, starting with the name of the plate.

The fact that it is called the "Disabled American Veteran" license plate has caused much confusion by veterans who are members of the DAV veterans' organization who think membership in the organization automatically entitles them to the plate, regardless of their disability. We will be suggesting that the name of the plate be changed to the "Disabled **Hoosier** Veteran" license plate. It will still be gold in color and will still contain the universal handicap symbol of the wheelchair.

Equally subjective is the portion of the law which states that the person must have "a physical condition that precludes the person from walking without pain or difficulty." We are recommending that the passage be amended to read that the person must have "a disability rating of 10% or more due to a disability that impairs the person's ability to walk." We will also require that the application be accompanied by certification from the appropriate branch of the armed forces or the US Department of Veterans Affairs "confirming a walking impairment of the person submitting the application" for the plate.

Finally, we are suggesting that the state produce only one license plate for disabled veterans. The DAV II license plate will be discontinued and there will be only the one gold plate with the wheelchair. A disabled veteran is a disabled veteran, regardless of the disability rating and, because it contains a wheelchair, it will still be recognized nationwide for disabled parking privileges.



Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs
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